

Guidelines for Great One-to-One Meetings

- ❑ Help you help your students organize their work so that you can assess how they are doing in service, in other Bonner requirements, and academically. Ask them to bring examples or notes about how they believe they are doing. Use the CLA or Site Evaluation as a springboard for conversation. You can also use their personal and professional goals as a springboard for more open-ended conversation.
- ❑ Help your students make important aspects about their performance (such as their hours, punctuality, participation in meetings and trainings, etc.) visible to you.
- ❑ Track your student's issues and action items. Keep notes in a notebook or file so that you can easily find them later.
- ❑ Follow-through on your own action items or things that you say you will do.
- ❑ Ask questions appropriately. Create and model a healthy set of boundaries with students, but don't be so remote or disinterested in them personally that they perceive you as cold or unfeeling.
- ❑ Use active listening skills, just as you hope them to do. Stay focused; don't be engaged in reading your emails, doodling, or spacing out.
- ❑ Problem solve with each student about the situations that they feel require attention. For example, problem solve about issues within the agency, conflicts with peers or supervisors, lack of resources, lack of clarity about what's expected or what to do next (in service), etc.
- ❑ Take the time to understand and articulate the behaviors you're looking for from your students (what kind of participation and performance do you want, in every setting) and explain what's working and what's not working. Remember, "five strokes of love for every stroke of challenge." In other words, balance positive feedback and constructive criticism. Help the student to assess his or her own behavior in terms of the clearly-understood expectations, so that feedback is not always personal.
- ❑ Organize your schedule to make time for one-on-ones. Make sure you make this a priority within your own semester work plan.
- ❑ To make this easier, think about the next time you will do one-to-one meetings. Identify actions you want to take immediately to make them work (such as email correspondence, creating a schedule, etc.) and also identify longer-term actions.
- ❑ Write 3-5 actions that you will take over the next week to improve your one-on-ones (with students or other staff).

7 basic communication tips

1. **Be a better listener.** Pay attention to your students. Sounds simple, but it is a common gripe, says Maureen Dolan Rosen, a human resources expert based in Chapel Hill, N.C. Among the things she stresses in workshops with managers is "learning how to listen better." She'll also offer a story about one of her former bosses, who cleverly perched his hand under his chin and appeared in meetings to be listening intently to whoever was speaking. But if you looked closely, under his glasses, his eyes were closed. He'd use the meetings to snooze.

2. **Make time for students.** Regular, one-on-one meetings with your students are important; at least once per semester is required. And don't take phone calls during meetings, unless it is an emergency. Show your students they have your full attention. Talk about their future paths and how you envision them growing. On the flip side, students need to be aware of your own time pressures and respect the many roles you are accountable for.

3. **Get the word out about key ideas, changes or upcoming activities as efficiently as possible.** Take great pains to reach those who should be in the know about changes coming down from above (within the campus, or program, or agency). This is tough. How easy it is to forget to tell someone, on a timely basis, something they should know about to do their service effectively. But know the downfall: Projects can get off track, people lose momentum, and you may also look like you aren't in the lead. A good practice is to "over-communicate the vision by a factor of ten."

4. **Put out a consistent message about your values (and try to model them in practice).** Knowing who you are, and what you stand for – at least professionally or in regard to how people should be treated within the program and in service - can help your students make better decisions on their own (or at least decisions that you will like better). If you're sending mixed messages, explain them or suffer the consequences.

5. **Give regular feedback; avoid surprises.** Students shouldn't first learn about significant performance issues in a semester one-to-one. They should be confronted well beforehand (and as humanely as possible) that there is something they need to improve. If done that way, the semester one-to-one can be more of a recap and a launching point for more open-ended discussion, reflection, and problem solving.

6. **Be effective in speaking to groups.** Keep in mind your communication during All Bonner Meetings and Class Meetings. If you can't speak well at these meetings or in front of student groups, you lose credibility. Learn how to do it; learn how to get better at it. The same thing goes for writing group e-mails.

7. **Don't hide behind e-mails.** Most delicate matters must be discussed in person. Most conflicts must be settled in person, or at least by phone. When emotions are involved, e-mail becomes a less-appropriate vehicle to communicate. And e-mail is never an appropriate method to tell someone a critical piece of feedback, some experts say. (Yes, I know it happens.)